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Introduction

I KNEW MARCOS PAYAN was my appointment as soon as he stepped in the coffee shop. It was the T-shirt that tipped me off—avocado green and a shade lighter than the Border Patrol uniform. It could have been his hair too. With it cut short and neatly combed to the side, he was either in the military or in law enforcement. I got up and introduced myself. I was right, but my initial satisfaction was tempered by his taciturn demeanor. He wasn't quite standoffish, but definitely uncomfortable. I had tried to usher him to the counter so I could buy him a cold drink, but he politely declined, explaining that agents could not accept gifts from the public because they could be misconstrued as bribes. I went back to the corner table I had secured for us and tried my best to look busy. He ordered a drink and waited at the counter.

A Border Patrol agent with about ten years of experience on the job, Marcos had agreed to meet with me as a favor to a mutual friend. He had been clear that this would not be an interview, but I still counted our meeting as a major win. For months I had made cold calls, sent unanswered emails, and guilted my friends into having awkward conversations with acquaintances all in the name of recruiting highly guarded agents for my research. Marcos's phone number was the fruit of one such effort.

When Marcos finally sat with me he tried to lean as far back as he could, an effort thwarted by the petite coffee-shop chairs. Maybe he was tired from the long shift he was coming from, or maybe he was regretting the meeting. Either way, our table felt like the size of a dinner plate, and I knew to get to the point fast. I explained that I was looking to understand immigration enforcement from the inside, and talking to agents was part of that effort. I clarified that all I needed was that he listen to my study plan and flag any issues.

Marcos thought that my main challenge would be getting agents to talk to me, something that resonated with my experience to that point. "Agents are

really private about their job. . . . I don't even like wearing this shirt right now, but I just got off work." "What's wrong with the shirt?" I asked. "It makes me look like a Border Patrol agent." I started to laugh, then stopped myself. He flashed me a cautious smile and explained that "the agency doesn't have the best reputation" and that "a lot of people just think we're dream crushers." I tried to probe, but it was clear that he was done with that part of the conversation. I reluctantly transitioned to less controversial topics, like who I might ask for permission to interview agents.

The next time I spoke to Marcos was that fall. Somewhat surprised, but clearly pleased that I had gotten the study approved, he invited me into his home for the interview. The sprawling ranch-style house was only a few years old and located in a solidly upper-middle-class neighborhood. The comforts of his gainful employment were on display—a shiny truck in the driveway, a tastefully furnished living room, and a large and welcoming backyard. This was a far cry from the modest upbringing that Marcos had experienced as the child of working-class Mexican parents.

Marcos was proud of the life he had built with the Border Patrol job, but he admitted it had not always been that way. "At first, I really felt bad for a while. It was one of those things where it was like, oh my God, this person, they're just trying to make their living." Marcos understood this firsthand because members of his family had entered the United States without documentation. Marcos's grandfather had "just walked across the border" in the 1950s, and two decades later his father made his own clandestine entry hidden in a "huge, old pickup truck."

Marcos was neither ashamed nor proud that he descended from these men who had broken immigration law. It was simply part of his family history. If anything, this history had made him critical of immigration agents when he was growing up. Marcos had been "a little anti-Border Patrol" when he was younger, but somewhere along the line he had learned that the agency was a viable employment option for someone like him, a bilingual high-school graduate with a clean criminal record and the desire to move up in the world. Marcos could not pinpoint when his perception changed, but he took the job in the early 2000s during one of the immigration enforcement system's various growth spurts. The Border Patrol job came with a good salary, predictable raises, health and retirement benefits, and the sheen of being a federal agent. It was a no-brainer as far as making a living, but he still felt compelled to seek his father's blessing.

I know for me, the big thing that got me to actually apply for [the] Border Patrol was when I talked to my dad about it. And he told me, “Look, there’s always going to be somebody there, whether it be you or somebody who is racist, somebody who does hate Mexican people or Latinos or what have you. . . . Why not it be somebody like you that actually knows what a lot of these people are going through?” And when he told me that, I was like, “You know what, that makes a lot of sense.”

What made a lot of sense to Marcos was the unspoken promise of his racial/ethnic and immigrant background. It was the assumption that he, the son and grandson of formerly undocumented Mexican immigrants, could somehow be a force for good within an agency with a reputation for being bad. How exactly Agent Payan would be different from those without his background was left unspoken, but the idea that his presence was an improvement was assumed.

A decade into the work, Marcos’s ideas about undocumented migration had remained stable in some ways. He still believed that most undocumented border crossers were like the men in his family, people who had been pushed out of their home countries by an array of hardships and pulled toward the United States by the prospect of work. He could even “relate” to immigrants because of his “roots,” he told me. At the same time, Agent Payan’s economic understanding of undocumented migration now stood alongside deep convictions about the importance of enforcement. He remained somewhat self-conscious of the work and did not espouse an outright ideological commitment to national sovereignty but explained his job in what he thought were more practical terms. Border control was a matter of keeping America safe from an array of loathsome characters. Economic migrants like his father and grandfather were not the issue—it was the cunning terrorists, the unscrupulous smugglers, and the violent drug traffickers he worried about. Agent Payan reasoned that he had to stop them all to catch the worst of them. This was just the way things were and had always been, he explained. “Along with my dad [and grandfather] . . . I’m sure a lot of horrible people came at the same time they did too.”

Over time, Marcos became Agent Payan and acquired that most bureaucratic of perspectives on the job. He believed that his role was narrow and a straightforward matter of law and policy. At the same time, he began to feel that people misunderstood immigration agents, just as he once did. The public

saw agents as “dream crushers” when all they were doing was apprehending people who could not prove that they had permission to be in the United States. He conceded that not all immigrants were criminals, but how could agents decipher between the *good ones* and the *bad ones* just by looking at them? He had learned that many of them were “liars” and “full of shit” anyway, so it was impossible to know who they really were without fingerprinting them. To fingerprint them, you had to arrest them first and call someone else to transport them to the processing station. At the station, it was a different agent’s job to put “the bodies” through a legal process designed by someone way above both of their pay grades. The regulations—not agents—would determine where those “bodies” belonged. Some of them would serve time in prison, others would be detained while awaiting immigration proceedings, others summarily deported. At the end of each shift, Agent Payan would get in his truck, rest in his well-appointed home, and repeat it all the next day.

Yes, Marcos could “relate” to immigrants—he had a certain level of understanding for their plight, could even perceive a vague sense of connection and feel sympathy for some of them. In this way, he was living up to the assumption that his father made when he gave him his blessing to work in immigration enforcement: the idea that if there was going to be a Border Patrol, it would be better to have someone like his son there because he would understand what people were going through and not “hate Mexican people or Latinos.” What neither Marcos nor his father accounted for in those early days was how the political-bureaucratic context in which Marcos would work, and the expectations of his role as an agent, would also shape and shift his views, perceptions, and behaviors. Marcos’s background would acquire new meaning at work, would sometimes be a source of tension, and sometimes a source of possibility, but it would never be independent from his responsibilities as an agent. Marcos would continue relating to immigrants because of his roots, but that would not stop Agent Payan from doing his job.

Over the course of two years, I interviewed ninety immigration enforcement agents—both US Border Patrol agents and Immigration and Customs Enforcement deportation officers—working in Arizona and California. I spoke to a diverse set of agents, but most of them were Latinas/os like Marcos Payan, children or grandchildren of Mexican immigrants, many of whom grew up along the US-Mexico border they now policed.¹ *Bordering on Indifference: Immigration Agents Negotiating Race and Morality* tells the story of how these agents come into the work, how they are trained and socialized once on the

job, and how that training and socialization impacts the way they reconcile the many moral and racial tensions of the work. Throughout the book I will draw contrasts and highlight similarities between Latina/o agents and their non-Latina/o peers, but the former will be our main interlocutors because these agents wield the immigration state's coercive power but are also members of the racial/ethnic group that is disproportionately targeted by that power.²

Even though readers will meet many agents like Marcos Payan, this book is not really about agents as individuals, nor is it only about the tensions they grapple with. *Bordering on Indifference* is about what Didier Fassin calls the moral economy of immigration control—the affective reactions and evaluative principles that are mobilized in relation to migrants and immigration. These norms, values, and sensibilities circulate in public space, through politics and bureaucratic and legal process, and they create the commonsense principles that agents use to make sense of their work and enact their professional role.³

I show that indifference is a major part of that moral economy. Michael Herzfeld defines indifference as “the rejection of common humanity . . . [and] the denial of identity, of selfhood” and argues that Western bureaucracies thrive on indifference, even as national myths celebrate hospitality.⁴ Nowhere is the paradox between espoused inclusion and indifference more visible than in the United States, a country that presents itself as a nation of immigrants and celebrates *e pluribus unum*, despite its settler-colonialist history and record of racialized exclusion.⁵

I examine the production of indifference on the front line of US immigration control, both as a bureaucratic strategy that agents use to look away from the most conflicting aspects of their work, and as a major product of their efforts to cultivate a moral sense of self. In doing so, I reveal how agents normalize socially and legally constructed categories, even when they are faced with evidence that contradicts the validity of these categories.⁶ My analysis thus extends our knowledge of how the moral judgments, emotional reactions, and simplified heuristics of immigration agents working within and outside the United States function as mechanisms of compliance and stability in what Cecilia Menjívar aptly called “bureaucracies of displacement.”⁷

Thinking about indifference helps us unlock the bureaucratic dimension of immigration control. Not only are detention, deportation, and border control “spectacles” that enact illegality and trade in cruelty, but they are also less visible forms of “slow violence” that are carried out routinely under the guise of legal rationality.⁸ *Bordering on Indifference* thus traces the development of what Hannah Arendt famously called the “banality of evil”⁹—it

shows how immigration bureaucracies produce apathy and distance, perpetuating exclusion through culture, law, and process, no matter what their workforce looks like. At no point do the agents featured in this book appear as unthinking cogs in a machine, however. We see that agents like Marcos Payan and his colleagues are invested in being indifferent to the moral ambiguities and racialized character of immigration control because protecting the status quo pays—they get to keep their job—and because if undocumented migration is not seen as categorically *bad*, they run the risk of not being seen as *good*.

US Immigration Control: Latinas/os on Both Sides of the State

Immigration control is a deeply racialized phenomenon throughout the world, and while its manifestations are varied, it is consistently people from the Global South who are targeted for detention, deportation, and border enforcement.¹⁰ In the United States, it is Latinx people and Mexicans specifically who hold the unwelcome distinction of being constructed as the country's archetypal illegal aliens.¹¹ Seen as undesirable as citizens and disposable as labor,¹² Mexicans have long borne the brunt of America's nation-building efforts through conquest, settler colonialism, and immigration-based restriction and policing.¹³ In addition to being othered in law, Mexicans have also been the poster child for the media and politicians' Latino threat narrative, which frames the group as an invading force that threatens American sovereignty and prosperity.¹⁴ Consequently, the US-Mexico boundary has been framed as a liability to be managed and controlled, a fact that has produced a highly militarized and deadly border.¹⁵

While Mexicans dominate the American racial imaginary as it relates to immigration, the racialization of illegality has now expanded to include the broader Latinx population.¹⁶ The category Latinas/os, which includes people from Central and South America but also the Caribbean, are overrepresented among those who are arrested, detained, surveilled, and deported by immigration authorities—this is the statistical reality that I am referring to when I say that the US immigration system is racialized. Agents, as well as some members of the public, may be tempted to explain racialized patterns through a logic of probability, that is, by saying that these racial patterns merely reflect the population of undocumented people in the United States or those arrested trying to cross the border. The government's own statistics belie that explanation.

For example, according to the government's population estimates, 63 percent of the undocumented population in 2018 was from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. That same year, people from those four countries accounted for 92 percent of deportations conducted by Immigration and Customs Enforcement.¹⁷ Enforcement outcomes are further patterned along gender lines. Men have a much higher chance of being deported from the United States than women.¹⁸ The overrepresentation of Latinas/os in the government's enforcement statistics is not a direct reflection of who is out of status in the United States, but an outcome of laws, policies, and practices that disproportionately target the group.

Being the country's archetypal criminal and illegal aliens has had devastating, intergenerational consequences on Latina/o communities,¹⁹ leading scholars to conclude that immigration enforcement functions as a gendered and racial project of social control.²⁰ In effect, the US immigration enforcement system is for Latinx people what mass incarceration has long been for African Americans.²¹ Given this context, when Latina/o immigration agents go to work for agencies like the United States Border Patrol (USBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), their experiences are marked by in-betweenness—they are state agents by profession, but also embodiments of the United States' main target as Latinas/os. This has remained true, even as these agencies have diversified.

As Kelly Lytle Hernández's seminal history of the Border Patrol showed, in the agency's early days immigration agents were primarily White working-class men looking to climb the economic and status ladder through the exclusion of Mexicans. Those White men were joined by a small but discernable number of middle-class Mexican borderlanders who distinguished themselves from working-class "Mexican browns" both racially and socioeconomically.²² Decades later, the racial demographics of immigration enforcement agencies have changed dramatically. Today about half of the Border Patrol and one-third of ICE are Latina/o/Hispanic agents. Most of these Latina/o/Hispanic agents work in the southwestern borderlands, where the US government concentrates its attention.

The browning of the coercive arm of the US immigration bureaucracy follows the same trend as the diversification of the broader police profession. The number of women and minoritized officers working in immigration enforcement grew most notably in the 1970s and 1980s following the federal government's attempt to remedy racial discrimination in employment through targeted efforts to increase Hispanic representation in the federal workforce.²³ In fact,

today the Department of Homeland Security is touted as a diversity leader in the federal government because of its prolific hiring of Hispanics into agencies like the USBP and ICE.²⁴

The diversification (or rather, *Latinization*) of the immigration bureaucracy has not disrupted the legacy of racism within enforcement agencies like the Border Patrol.²⁵ In fact, the hiring of Latinas/os has been facilitated by the massive growth of the US enforcement apparatus, which has become more restrictive and criminalized over time. When Latinas/os go to work for the USBP and ICE, no matter their initial motivations, they embody state power and come to articulate ideas that reflect immigration agencies' ideological positions.²⁶ Latina/o immigration agents have thus implemented many of the border control and deportation policies that have had devastating impacts on Latinas/os in and outside of the United States. Some of those policies have even been conceived by Latina/o agents themselves.

Prevention through Deterrence (PTD)—the border control policy widely known for militarizing the US-Mexico border and, as Jason De León powerfully put it, weaponizing the desert against migrants²⁷—was the brainchild of then El Paso Border Patrol Chief Silvestre Reyes. Prevention through Deterrence started as Operation Blockade (eventually renamed Operation Hold the Line), an initiative spearheaded by Reyes in response to El Paso residents advocating against Border Patrol agent excesses, which included chasing undocumented immigrants through their communities and even schools. The idea behind what eventually became PTD was to line up agents along the busiest crossing corridors with the intention of deterring migrants, instead of conducting apprehensions once migrants were already on US soil. The strategy did not deter undocumented crossings, but it did make them less visible in border towns by pushing migrants into remote areas. This, in turn, raised the stakes of crossing the border without documentation, which disrupted Mexican circular migration, growing the undocumented population in the United States and generating the conditions in which profit-seeking smuggling organizations now thrive. Worst of all, it also made crossing the US-Mexico border a deadly prospect.²⁸

That the diversification of the USBP and ICE has not fundamentally changed the racialized character of immigration control challenges the common misperception that simply diversifying workforces will create more humane policing systems.²⁹ Scholars of representative bureaucracy have demonstrated as much. Representative bureaucracy theory is concerned with how demographic shifts in public agencies can improve minorities' experiences with the state. The driving mechanism for that improvement would be discretion, where bureaucrats

(e.g., Latina/o immigration agents) who have an affinity with coethnic clients (e.g., Latina/o immigrants) would use their discretionary power to benefit those clients. There is a good deal of research showing the benefits of diverse workforces in institutions with helping missions, like education,³⁰ but in law enforcement the evidence is more mixed.³¹

Bordering on Indifference is less a case study of representative bureaucracy and more a cautionary tale for those who uncritically conflate institutional diversity with organizational change, especially in policing. My findings align with those who have argued that the idea of racial representation is based on the seemingly straightforward but, in practice, quite thorny premise that racial categories correspond to identities and competencies,³² as well as a rather thin conceptualization of *representation*.³³ Bureaucracies can thwart group commitments, and this is especially true in racialized organizations, like the US immigration system, which constrain minority bureaucrats' individual agency through rules and regulations, as well as through racialized sanctions.³⁴ As Celeste Watkins-Hayes put it, "bureaucratic environments with histories of racial inequality and orientations that apply 'red tape' restrictively or punitively are likely to generate strong boundaries between racial minorities in bureaucrat-client relationships."³⁵ *Bordering on Indifference* contributes to the conversation on racial representation in bureaucracies through a case study that shows how diversity and repression can coexist in policing, an issue I return to in the conclusion.

Agents' Legitimation as a Window into the Moral Economy of Immigration Control

To be a federal immigration enforcement agent is to be a compulsory participant in what is a highly racialized, politically contentious, and moral debate about how the United States manages undocumented migration.³⁶ The public is divided, and the debate is divisive. On one side you have restrictionists, who frame undocumented migration as a crime and assault on national sovereignty. Immigrationists counter that the United States is Janus faced, not just tolerating, but even encouraging a certain amount of undocumented migration. In any case, they argue, migration should be managed humanely.

False dichotomies about the morality of undocumented immigrants permeate both sides of this contentious debate. As Emine F. Elcioglu put it, people with drastically different immigration politics are all vying for their own version of the "third-world migrant," a gendered and racialized construction that

serves as the foil for both progressives and restrictionists. Progressives imagine the so-called third-world migrant as a feminized powerless victim while among restrictionists that image takes on a hypermasculine dangerous character that is a threat to Americans and state agents.³⁷ Latina/o immigrants serve as the archetypes for these debates, and the most restrictionist attitudes are linked to the image of the undocumented Latino man, imagined as indigent, with little formal education, working in a low-status job, and lacking English proficiency.³⁸ The agents I spoke to are critical participants in these normative contests, and their contributions are proscribed by their professional role—no matter how they might have thought about immigration before they got the job or what beliefs they might hold about immigrants in private. When at work they represent the restrictionist state.

As a result, interviewing agents about their work meant that I had a frontline view of how they engage in this debate on behalf of their employer. As representatives of the state, agents are both producers and consumers of the coercive bureaucratic ideologies that the USBP and ICE deploy to make the exclusion of migrants more palatable and to make the growth of the bureaucracy seem necessary and urgent.³⁹ While symbolic politics are central to immigration debates throughout the world, the performative dimension of US immigration control is especially pronounced at the US-Mexico border, a place that the US government has long defined as a threat to American sovereignty and its settler colonialist ambitions of a White America.⁴⁰ As Peter Andreas put it, successful migration management at the country's southern border has always been more about effective image crafting than about actual deterrence.⁴¹

As representatives of the immigration state, all agents are engaged in this incessant project of legitimation, but the pull toward justification is especially pronounced for Latina/o agents, who deal with layered legitimacy deficits. Not only are Latina/o immigration agents members of a "dirty work" occupation,⁴² just like the rest of their colleagues, but they are also called to account for implementing immigration laws that disproportionately target and exclude *their own*. The intersection of race/ethnicity and professional role produces tensions for Latina/o agents, whether in the form of internal dissonance (as when Agent Payan said he felt bad for arresting people who came to the United States for work) or due to external sanctions, as when people call agents traitors for transgressing the expectation of solidarity against racialized immigration politics and policies.⁴³

Bordering on Indifference reveals the moral economy of immigration control by capitalizing on frontline immigration agents' penchant for legitimation. As

previously defined, the moral economy of immigration control includes the norms, values, and affects that circulate in public space and are reflected in bureaucratic and legal process. In my analysis, moral economy is closely related to occupational culture in that both contain norms and values and even heuristics that shape worldviews and provide behavioral prescriptions for frontline agents.⁴⁴ I lean more heavily toward the concept of moral economy because it emphasizes dynamism, pushing us to think about cultural values, norms, and principles not as coherent systems, but as part of a broader constellation of contested ideologies that are produced and circulated by states and their agents to legitimize immigration control. As Didier Fassin put it, moral economies are less about moralities as stable ideas and behavioral guides (although this is part of their function) and more about the political struggles over immigration control as a normatively dubious state practice.⁴⁵ In examining the logics that agents believe vindicate them and their enterprise, I reveal that indifference is key to how states police territorial borders and the symbolic boundaries of national belonging.

My focus on agents, an understudied group, adds a much-needed frontline account to existing research on immigration control as an inherently coercive and exclusionary form of state power that is applied in racially disparate ways. Cecilia Menjívar's conceptualization of enforcement agencies as "bureaucracies of displacement" that uphold legal violence and structural inequalities through state classification systems is key to my analysis.⁴⁶ Antje Ellermann's conceptualization of deportation as coercive social regulation is central to how I understand the moral ambiguity of immigration control at the implementation stage.⁴⁷ My focus on race is buttressed by Kelly Lytle Hernández's work on the Border Patrol as a mechanism of racialized social control in the borderlands, as well as Tanya Golash-Boza's account of deportation as a tool of global racial capitalism.⁴⁸

I also build on the work of scholars who have studied immigration officials as what Michael Lipsky famously called "street-level bureaucrats," or policy implementers who are often thought of as low-level employees but have extraordinary power to determine legal and policy outcomes. Street-level bureaucrats' power comes from their autonomy from central authority structures and, most importantly, their discretion or their ability to use their judgments about how policies will be translated into work practices. Discretion is a constant in policy implementation because written mandates are necessarily indeterminate, leaving bureaucrats to negotiate the myriads of situations and people that they will encounter.⁴⁹

Research on the implementation of immigration policy in the United States is epitomized by seminal works, including Kitty Calavita's *Inside the State*, that have shown how bureaucrats negotiate external politics, their mission, and organizational pressures to render immigration law to the public.⁵⁰ The picture we get from studying immigration bureaucrats—everyone from airport inspectors to customs and deportation officers, asylum officials, judges, and lawyers—is that they are neither apolitical implementers of others' wishes, nor completely autonomous actors.⁵¹ Rather, they are constantly negotiating their mandates and moral judgments, which are informed by dominant constructions of immigrants as either deserving or undeserving, as well as their resources and constraints as they make decisions. These decisions fundamentally impact how immigration laws take shape, making it so that bureaucrats and the agencies they represent are not just policy-implementation entities—they make law.⁵²

I too treat immigration agents as street-level bureaucrats, centering the power of discretion, ideology, and process to shape what sociolegal scholars call law-in-action.⁵³ However, *Bordering on Indifference* is not a book about the mechanics of implementing a specific policy, nor are decision-making heuristics its major focus. This is a book about the normative principles that pervade agents' work; it is about the normalization of exclusion, and it is ultimately about the making of indifference in institutions like the US immigration system. In this way, my work is in conversation with research that examines the moralities and bureaucratic rationalities of various professionals, not just immigration agents, but also corporate managers, welfare counselors, prison officers, and other law enforcers.⁵⁴ The processes that I am analyzing exist “upstream” from decision making, as Bernardo Zacka put it, so they can be difficult to perceive, but they are critically important because they protect the status quo in organizations.⁵⁵

In studying these normative principles, I bridge policy implementation research with a broader discussion on how states engender indifference to various forms of inequality.⁵⁶ Bureaucratization is central to the creation of that indifference because bureaucracies are rule-saturated, hierarchically organized environments that encourage specialization and predictable progress toward specified goals.⁵⁷ This type of technical rationality can mollify moral instincts and thwart social group commitments in a variety of policy fields.⁵⁸ The social distance created by bureaucratic culture is especially pronounced in law enforcement organizations, like the USBP and ICE, where the archetypal *client* is constructed as an undeserving, immoral “bad guy.”⁵⁹ My

particular emphasis is on how these characteristics of bureaucracy help frontline agents look away from human suffering and perpetuate harm through law.

Although I center the racialized and moral dynamics that occur at the US-Mexico border, this book is part of a broader conversation about how globalization, shifting conceptions of penal power, and ever-expanding mechanisms of punishment are shaping immigration control throughout the world.⁶⁰ Scholars working in distinct national contexts have examined immigration control from the ground up, revealing cross-national patterns in how immigration bureaucrats are trained, how they exercise discretion and engage in emotional labor, and how they cultivate legitimacy for themselves and their employers.⁶¹ This work reminds us that while country-level histories, laws, and immigration flows shape the moral economy of immigration control in distinct settings, the normative questions at the heart of detention, deportation, and border control are supranational.

Situating the Moral Economy: Immigration as a Crime and Security Issue

Bordering on Indifference reveals the moral economy of US immigration control through the worldviews of frontline immigration agents. To understand those worldviews, we must first situate them within the historical, legal, and bureaucratic context in which they thrive.⁶² That context is one where the US government treats immigration as a homeland security and crime control issue. This is a global trend, which is sometimes referred to as crimmigration,⁶³ the securitization of immigration,⁶⁴ the turn to governing immigration through crime,⁶⁵ or simply the criminalization of immigration.⁶⁶ I use these terms interchangeably throughout my analysis, but the term “crimmigration,” which was coined by Juliet Stumpf in the early 2000s, most accurately captures the context in which US immigration enforcement agents work.⁶⁷ The USBP and ICE are hybrid agencies; they operate under the logic of criminal justice organizations, even though they are managing migration, which is an administrative process.

The global trend toward criminalizing immigration has distinct country-level historical and legal markers, but in the United States this phenomenon reflects a broader societal shift toward punishment and the “get tough” paradigms that have dominated American politics in a post-civil rights era.⁶⁸ As the government has declared wars on various social issues—first the War on Poverty, which was replaced with the War on Crime, then the War on Drugs, and now the War on

Terror—the government created a “repressive and exclusionist” society that has had disproportionately negative impacts on African Americans through mass incarceration and on Latinas/os through immigration enforcement.⁶⁹ It is true that *criminals* had been barred from entering the United States from the earliest days of immigration lawmaking and that illegal entry was criminalized as early as 1924,⁷⁰ but the criminalization of immigration as we know it today has been a decades-long legal and political project that reached new heights between the 1970s and the 1990s. Table 1 shows the laws that most fundamentally distorted the already-blurred boundaries between migration management and the punishment of crime in the United States.

The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) looms large in the story of heightened immigrant criminalization. The act is most widely remembered as a legalization program that granted amnesty to 2.7 million qualifying immigrants, most of them Mexican. When President Ronald Reagan signed IRCA he hailed the legislation as the welcome product of a long and difficult bipartisan effort to “humanely regain control of our borders” while providing a path to citizenship for millions of undocumented people.⁷¹ However, the legislation was a “three-legged stool” that also included provisions to toughen border control and sanction employers who knowingly hired undocumented workers.⁷²

The sponsors of IRCA portrayed it as a comprehensive strategy to end unauthorized migration by cutting off the demand for undocumented labor and addressing the supply side through escalated border enforcement. The law fell short on the first goal but succeeded dramatically in its efforts to escalate immigration enforcement. The IRCA is responsible for a massive injection of funds toward border control specifically. The Border Patrol doubled in size because of IRCA, as spending for border control ballooned from \$700 million in 1986 to over \$1.46 billion by 1996.⁷³ This law set the groundwork for the Prevention through Deterrence program, which dramatically militarized the US-Mexico border, a process that had been happening since at least the 1970s.⁷⁴

The act also contained legal provisions that have been subsequently expanded and used to grow the reach of immigration enforcement. For instance, the law contained a short but weighty provision called “Expeditious Deportation of Convicted Aliens.” The brief section specifies that in the case of non-citizens convicted of a crime that makes them deportable, the attorney general should “begin deportation proceedings as expeditiously as possible.”⁷⁵ This mandate made the deportation of “criminal aliens” an enforcement priority

TABLE 1. Key Immigration Enforcement Legislation, 1980s–1990s

Year/Legislation	Major Provisions
1986 / Immigration Reform and Control Act	Grants amnesty, creates employer sanctions, expands border control. Includes “Expeditious Deportation of Convicted Aliens” provision, which precipitates the creation of various programs to identify and remove noncitizens convicted of criminal offenses.
1988 / Anti–Drug Abuse Act	Creates category of “aggravated felony,” ¹ calls for mandatory detention of those convicted of aggravated felony, disqualifies those convicted of an aggravated felony from eligibility for voluntary departure.
1990 / Immigration Act	Expands list of aggravated felonies, ² makes people convicted of aggravated felony ineligible for asylum, limits judicial discretion to grant deportation relief, establishes a twenty-year ban for deportees convicted of an aggravated felony.
1996 / Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act	Expands list of aggravated felonies, makes convictions retroactive, requires mandatory detention of certain classes of noncitizens, expands classification of crimes of moral turpitude and deportation consequences for these crimes.
1996 / Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act	Expands list of aggravated felonies, reduces sentencing requirement for categorization as aggravated felony to one year (from five), retroactively applies convictions, expands mandatory detention, establishes three- and ten-year bans for overstaying visa, creates 287(g), creates “cancellation of removal,” creates “expedited removal” and “reinstatement of removal” procedure, changes “deportation” to “removal.”

¹Includes murder, drug trafficking, and firearms trafficking.

²Expanded to include money laundering, crimes of violence for which the term of imprisonment is at least five years.

that became more and more central to the immigration system's logics and practices over time.⁷⁶ As significant as IRCA's provisions were in setting the groundwork for the increased criminalization of immigration, the law was just the tip of the iceberg.

With the War on Drugs raging, legislators included increasingly punitive immigration provisions into laws that were not immigration focused. Congress passed the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, a law designed to increase criminal penalties for drug offenses. The law also created the now infamous "aggravated felony" for immigration purposes. Originally, only murder and drug or firearms trafficking constituted aggravated felonies, but Congress has consistently added to the list of crimes that qualify so that today the category includes everything from rape to receipt of stolen property. Aggravated felonies have been described as having an "Alice in Wonderland" quality since they need not be aggravated or felonious, but their lore looms large in the moral panic around criminal aliens.⁷⁷ The Immigration Act of 1990 further expanded the aggravated felony category to include money laundering and crimes of violence for which the term of imprisonment is at least five years. This act also made those who are convicted of an aggravated felony ineligible for asylum, established a twenty-year ban for deportees convicted of an aggravated felony, and limited immigration judges' discretion to grant deportation relief.

If IRCA, the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, and the Immigration Act of 1990 set the foundation for today's punitive immigration system, the 1996 Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) and Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) built the house. The AEDPA was passed on April 24, 1996, just days after the one-year anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing. President Clinton was making good on the promise he had made just days after the bombing, to pass an antiterrorism bill that would keep Americans safe—not just from criminals, who had loomed large in the 1990s' law-and-order discourse, but also from terrorists. President Clinton warned that the bill he was signing that day made several "ill-advised changes in our immigration laws" that were unrelated to fighting terrorism. These provisions, he predicted, would "produce extraordinary administrative burdens" for the immigration bureaucracy, and he urged Congress to correct them in other pending legislation.⁷⁸ Congress did not heed President Clinton's warning, and when he signed the IIRIRA just five months later, he made no mention of the ill-advised immigration provisions that had been extended and expanded.

The AEDPA and IIRIRA distorted the boundaries between immigration and criminal law to the point that they are difficult to see. Together these laws

dramatically expanded detention and deportation of noncitizens, while also severely limiting judicial discretion over immigration agents' decisions and restricting immigrants' relief options. For instance, AEDPA required the mandatory detention of all "criminal aliens," while dramatically increasing the number of people that met that designation. The act also expanded the list of crimes that qualify as aggravated felonies for immigration purposes, and it retroactively made legal permanent residents deportable for past crimes. The IIRIRA further expanded the list of offenses that would require mandatory detention and also empowered immigration agents to quickly deport people who committed fraud or misrepresentation through a process called "expedited removal." Many of these legal changes also apply retroactively, meaning that crimes added to the ever-expanding list of aggravated felonies trigger mandatory detention and deportation even if they were committed before 1996. The IIRIRA further eliminated judicial discretion to grant relief from deportation in cases where a person had been convicted of an aggravated felony, replacing previously available discretionary relief with a much narrower form of relief called "cancellation of removal." Together these laws solidified the shift to an immigration system that is "harsher, less forgiving, and more insulated from judicial review" than ever before.⁷⁹

It is a common misconception that the Global War on Terror created the crimmigration system, a premise that this brief legal history dispels. As Jennifer Chacón aptly put it, the immigration system had been functioning as an adjunct to the criminal justice system for decades before the 9/11 attacks.⁸⁰ What did happen after 9/11 is that the already-distended immigration system grew exponentially as political and bureaucratic elites incorporated homeland security discourses into the already-punitive immigration system.

*The Department of Homeland Security:
A Twenty-First-Century Home for Immigration Control Agencies*

The contemporary immigration bureaucracy's structure was created by the 2002 Homeland Security Act, an act signed with bipartisan support in the wake of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Then president George W. Bush had argued that the country's homeland security mechanisms were in disarray and no match for the "global terrorist threat" that was the country's newest enemy. To fight this cunning adversary, the president and his advisers proposed to streamline the country's homeland security functions into a cabinet-level department, with a direct line to the president. At the signing of

the act, George W. Bush said, “To succeed in their mission, leaders of the new department must change the culture of many diverse agencies—directing all of them toward the principal objective of protecting the American people.”⁸¹ This was the biggest government reorganization since President Harry S. Truman signed the National Security Act of 1947, which consolidated military branches and created the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense.⁸²

The immigration bureaucracy of the time, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), was one of the twenty-two agencies whose culture had to be redirected toward the new goal of homeland security. Table 2 outlines the housing of the US immigration bureaucracy since 1891, when it was formed as such. The INS had long struggled with the colossal task of adjudicating immigration benefits and managing border control, detention, and deportation.⁸³ Proposals to separate service from enforcement had been recurrent throughout its history but were not achieved until the Homeland Security Act of 2002 created the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which became operational on March 1, 2003.

Under the DHS, the US immigration bureaucracy is a multipronged entity that includes three main agencies with distinct functions: the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Like all DHS components, these agencies have homeland security as their core mission. However, the principal objective differs by agency. The USCIS is charged with service provision, which consists mainly of adjudicating immigration benefits, such as processing visa and asylum applications, facilitating legal status changes, and managing naturalization procedures. The enforcement side of the bureaucracy includes CBP, charged with immigration control at and between ports of entry, and ICE, charged with immigration control within the country’s interior. While the lines between service and enforcement have always been blurry in US immigration control, the distinction is a helpful shorthand that points to different agencies within the broader system. My fieldwork was in the enforcement side of the bureaucracy, with CBP agents and ICE officers—it did not include USCIS officers.

Immigration enforcement, which was already favored in its predecessor, the INS, has grown dramatically within the DHS. Together, CBP and ICE accounted for 27 percent of the DHS’s \$52.2 billion budget in 2022; USCIS accounted for 5 percent. The CBP’s 2003 budget of \$5.9 billion had nearly tripled to \$16.3 billion by 2022. Immigration and Customs Enforcement also

TABLE 2. Administrative Housing of the US Immigration Bureaucracy since 1891

Department of Treasury, 1891–1903
Office of the Superintendent of Immigration (1891–95)
Bureau of Immigration (1895–1903)
Department of Commerce and Labor, 1903–13
Bureau of Immigration (1903–6)
Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization (1906–13)
Department of Labor, 1913–40
Bureau of Immigration (1913–33)
Bureau of Naturalization (1913–33)
Immigration and Naturalization Service (1933–40)
Department of Justice, 1940–2003
Immigration and Naturalization Service (1940–2003)
Department of Homeland Security, 2003–Present
United States Citizenship and Immigration Services
Customs and Border Protection
Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Source: Most of this material is sourced from the National Archives, “Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service [INS],” <https://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/085.html#85.1>, accessed December 1, 2022.

benefited from this funding boom, growing its \$3.3 billion budget in 2003 to \$8.4 billion by 2022. Its Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO), which is the arm charged with detention and deportation, grew from 2,710 agents in 2003 to 8,374 by 2022. The Border Patrol, whose growth had already been on an upward trajectory since IRCA, doubled in size between 2003 and 2022, from 10,717 to 21,759 agents.⁸⁴ The agents I interviewed are a fundamental part of the “formidable machinery” that is the US immigration system in the twenty-first century.⁸⁵

This machinery is one where immigration is treated as a crime and security issue and where escalated enforcement efforts are propped up by what Rubén Rumbaut calls “zombie ideas,” or old misconceptions about immigrants as criminals and unassimilable moochers.⁸⁶ This system is also undergirded by racialized moral panics that target Latinas/os specifically for exclusion, based on the logic of criminality and immorality.⁸⁷ In the post-9/11 context, these racialized tropes about Latina/o immigrants have merged with tropes about Middle Eastern terrorists coming through the unprotected southern border, the activation of a “brown threat” that motivates much support for increased

TABLE 3. Interview Sample Characteristics by Agency

	USBP	ICE	Total
Sex			
Male	47	25	72 (80%)
Female	13	5	18 (20%)
Race/ethnicity			
Latinx	41	13	54 (60%)
White	16	9	25 (28%)
Black	0	6	6 (7%)
Asian / Pacific Islander	2	2	4 (4%)
Native American	1	0	1 (1%)
Education			
High school diploma	9	0	9 (10%)
Some college	22	8	30 (33%)
Associate's degree	7	1	8 (9%)
Baccalaureate degree	16	9	25 (28%)
Master's degree	2	6	8 (9%)
Missing data	4	6	10 (11%)
Veterans			
Yes	22	17	39 (43%)
No	38	13	51 (57%)
Years with Agency			
1–5	7	4	11 (12%)
5–10	29	4	33 (37%)
More than 10	24	22	46 (51%)
Total	60	30	90 (100%)

enforcement under the color-blind guise of homeland security.⁸⁸ This is the ideological, bureaucratic, and legal context in which the agents I interviewed worked and that served as a backdrop for my conversations with them.

Description of the Research

Immigration agents are what social scientists call a “hard-to-reach” population, a group that is difficult to recruit into research studies. Some populations are hard to reach because they are in structural precarity; others are hard to reach because they can engage in organizational gatekeeping.⁸⁹ Immigration agents are the latter. In the methodological appendix I discuss how I gained access to federal immigration agents and describe some of the power dynamics inherent

TABLE 4. Latina/o Agents by Agency, Generation, and Biraciality

	USBP	ICE	Total/Percent
1st generation	5	6	11 (20%)
2nd generation	24	4	28 (52%)
3rd + generation	7	0	7 (13%)
Biracial	1	2	3 (6%)
Missing data	3	1	4 (7%)
Other Latina/o	1	0	1 (2%)
Total	41	13	54 (100 %)

Note: 1st generation includes agents born outside of the United States; 2nd generation includes agents born in the United States to at least one foreign-born parent; 3rd generation includes agents who are the grandchildren of immigrants; biracial includes Latinx agents who have a non-Latinx parent; other Latinx includes one agent with a Spanish-speaking Caribbean background.

to the process of “studying up,” the term anthropologist Laura Nader used when issuing a call to research power holders.⁹⁰ Here I provide the basic contours of my research.

Sample Description

I interviewed ninety immigration agents, sixty who work for the US Border Patrol and thirty who work for ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations. I interviewed these agents in Arizona and California, between the summer of 2014 and the winter of 2016. These agents were primarily Latina/o and White and predominately male. Almost three quarters of the Latina/o agents were either immigrants (20 percent) or children of immigrants (52 percent). The remaining Latina/o agents either were grandchildren of immigrants (13 percent) or were of mixed ancestry (6 percent). I had missing generational data for four agents. Except for two agents, one with a Spanish-speaking Caribbean background and another with a Central American parent, all the Latina/o agents were of Mexican descent (see table 3 for sample demographics and table 4 for Latina/o agents’ racial and generational status).

On average, the agents I interviewed had about a decade of experience in immigration enforcement, although not necessarily with the agency they were working with at the time of our interview. Several of the ICE officers started

off as Border Patrol agents or working at ports of entry. None of the Border Patrol agents had worked with ICE.

Based on my agreement with the Border Patrol I did not collect agent names, and I continued this practice with ICE. In previous publications I did not create pseudonyms given the risk of using one that corresponded to a respondent's real name. This approach is not sustainable given the book's narrative format, so I have randomly generated pseudonyms. I take great care to mask my respondents in several ways, by not overdisclosing and sometimes omitting details that would make them more identifiable. If there is any overlap between pseudonyms and real names it is purely coincidental.

Fieldwork Locations

I interviewed Border Patrol agents in two cities on the US-Mexico border. I use the pseudonyms Desert City, Arizona, and Mountain Valley, California, to refer to these locations. Most of the ICE officers I interviewed worked in Mountain Valley, although a few worked in a larger border city in California. I did not interview ICE officers in Arizona because I was unable to get access to ICE in that state.

Desert City and Mountain Valley are predominately Hispanic—specifically, Mexican—towns or cities in the American Southwest, in counties that are similar in size and demographics. When I began my fieldwork in 2014, the counties in which Desert City and Mountain Valley are located each had a population size of about two hundred thousand people; they were majority Hispanic (between 60 and 85 percent) and had a median household income of about \$40,000. About 10 percent of the population in Desert City and Mountain Valley had a bachelor's degree in 2014, and both counties had a similar poverty rate between 20 and 30 percent.⁹¹ These county-level characteristics had not changed substantially when I finished my fieldwork in 2016.

Approximately half of the ICE interviews were with officers who worked in another city that was much larger (over three million people), more diverse (about 40 percent Hispanic), and with a median household income twice as high as those of Mountain Valley and Desert City. The agents I interviewed there were more likely to be White or Black than the Mountain Valley ICE officers, who were primarily Latina/o. Given these differences in the location and since only three of the ICE officers from the bigger city were Latina/o, I do not delve into this city's context as deeply as I do for Mountain Valley and Desert City, where the bulk of my respondents worked.

Data Collection Period and Process

I conducted semi-structured interviews, meaning that I had a set of questions that I wanted to ask, but was open to discussing topics that were salient to agents themselves. My questions focused mostly on agents' work experiences, starting from the point when they became interested in the career and then delving more deeply into various aspects of their work. I conducted most of the interviews in Border Patrol or ICE buildings, including main offices, stations, detention centers, and local jails.

My 2014–16 fieldwork period coincided with a significant increase in asylum seeking among Central American forced migrants and a decrease in adult Mexican migration at the US-Mexico border.⁹² President Obama was in office for the bulk of my fieldwork, although I did interview some ICE officers during the 2016 presidential campaign and during the transition to the first Trump administration. This political context heightened agents' penchant for legitimation, pushing agents to explain and yes, even defend themselves and their work as they spoke to me. Agents told me stories that they felt captured the nature of their job. They recounted memorable experiences and people that they felt communicated morals and lessons. They gave explanations they felt would clarify misunderstandings, justifications they thought might neutralize criticisms.

At first this worried and frustrated me. Over time I accepted that no matter how I presented myself, agents would treat me as a proxy for different segments of the public or *audiences* that they wanted to speak to.⁹³ Eventually, I came to relish their efforts as a window into the deeply hidden normative ideas that upholds their sense of legitimacy. Rather than pretend that my presence as an outsider was inconsequential to what agents told me, I use their reaction to me as a window into how they understand themselves vis-à-vis various publics.⁹⁴

I discuss all of this in more detail in the methodological appendix, but for now it is sufficient to say that my interviews with agents were an excellent source of "accounts," especially when we discussed the most controversial aspects of their work. Accounts are statements that we, as social actors, issue to one another to explain behavior that is perceived to be "unanticipated" or "untoward," in the words of Marvin Scott and Stanford Lyman.⁹⁵ Accounts are a form of impression management that allow agents to repair threats to their positive self-image and that are given in response to some form of status degradation.⁹⁶ These linguistic devices "reveal nonconscious motives and

meanings and . . . illuminate individuals' interpretations" in context.⁹⁷ Accounts contain the links between collective understandings and individual behavior. I use accounts as a window into that which is unspoken and taken for granted, a window into the moral economy of immigration control on the front lines.

A Note on Terminology

Throughout this book I refer to "Border Patrol agents" or "USBP agents," "ICE officers," and "immigration agents" when not making agency-level distinctions. These choices are intentional but may be difficult to follow for readers only casually acquainted with the US immigration bureaucracy. As mentioned above, the DHS parsed the immigration system into three distinct agencies: USCIS, CBP, and ICE. The agents I interviewed worked in the enforcement arms of the bureaucracy, CBP and ICE.

Within CBP there are multiple components, including the Office of Field Operations (OFO) and the United States Border Patrol (USBP). In public discourse USBP agents are commonly conflated or confused with CBP OFO officers, who work at ports of entry or at airports. An easy way to remember the difference between USBP agents and CBP OFO officers is that the former wear green, while the latter wear navy blue. I interviewed sixty USBP agents.

Within ICE there are two components: Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI). Detention centers and deportations, among other immigration-related functions, are managed by ERO. The investigative and security functions of the agency are handled by HSI, and while it has jurisdiction over many immigration functions, that is not its emphasis. I interviewed thirty ICE ERO officers; most of them were either deportation officers or supervisory detention and deportation officers. I did not interview HSI agents.

Chapter Overview

Bordering on Indifference is organized as a processual account of Latina/o agents' growing investment in the moral economy of immigration control. It shows how Latina/o agents and their colleagues grapple with and reconcile the many racial tensions and moral ambiguities of their work. Each time agents succeed in resolving the contradictions they encounter on the job, indifference appears as both a resource and a product of their efforts.

Our entry into the world of immigration agents begins with chapter 1, an account of the four primary pathways into the profession. We learn that while many agents grew up *aspiring* to work in law enforcement, others pragmatically *drifted* into the job, some slotted in through the *military-to-policing pipeline*, and a minority were looking for a way to *serve* their country. These pathways—*aspiring*, *drifting*, *military-to-policing*, and *serving*—are racially patterned. Agents who drifted into the profession are mostly Mexican Americans who grew up on the border, the *aspiring* and *military* pathways are the most diverse, and only White agents said they came into immigration work to serve their country.

Distinct pathways into the profession all lead to one place: a police training program that teaches agents to think about immigration as a crime and security issue, no matter how they thought about the work before they came in. Chapter 2 maps the process of becoming an agent. I delve into the DHS's training program, as well as agents' experiences learning to think about immigration and migrants from a policing standpoint. We also see how agents use *manufactured ambiguity*, or the idea that agents can never be sure of undocumented immigrants' true identities or intentions, to close the gap between the "real police work" that they thought they would be doing and the administrative functions that pervade their work.

Chapter 3 discusses *caring control* and *disinterested professionalism*, two rationalities through which Latina/o agents make sense of the intersection of their race/ethnicity and professional role. Agents who engage in *caring control* frame themselves as humane and culturally competent agents who improve the qualitative character of migrants' custodial experience, while those who adopt a *disinterested professionalism* adhere to bureaucratic staples of neutrality and consistency across cases. Regardless of their approach, I argue that it is the immigration state that most benefits from Latinas/os' labor. Some Latina/o agents may be willing and able to deploy their Spanish fluency and cultural repertoire to be more effective regulators, increasing the state's capacity to control coethnics. Some agents are unwilling or unable to do that, but their presence as Latinx people is still useful to the government in a symbolic sense.

Chapter 4 delves into the moral ambiguities of immigration enforcement, examining how agents use denial to turn away from human suffering. Three forms of denial pervade agents' work: *denial of responsibility*, *denial of harm*, and *denial of the victim*. Agents deny responsibility by leaning on rules and laws, they deny harm by recasting their work as helping, or not hurting immigrants, and they deny the victim by implicating immigrants in their own suffering. Latina/o agents and other agents of color favor forms of denial that negate their

responsibility, or the harm done by immigration control, while White agents tend to deny the victim and frame themselves as righteous distributors of immigration consequences. Denial strategies give agents moral license to perform immigration control, especially in moments of uncertainty.

Chapter 5 shows how agents' multilayered legitimacy deficits manifest as "moral taint," which is a stigma associated with work that is ethically dubious. Like all workers who deal with occupational stigma, immigration agents want to repair that moral taint, and they do so primarily by *concealing* their work and *refuting* what they see as misconceptions about themselves and their job. Since Latina/o agents deal with layered stigmas, they have an additional strategy: *defensive nationalism*. The product of concealment, refutation, and defensive nationalism is a sense of legitimacy that protects the immigration system's status quo from the ground up.

In the conclusion, I discuss lessons learned, especially in relation to workforce diversity in policing. I also discuss broader debates about whether it is possible to create "humane" immigration systems and end with three paths forward: uncoupling immigration and criminal law, divestment, and cultural change. I also encourage readers to think about borders and boundaries on a more macro scale, reminding us that it is the global system of bordered nation-states that begets immigration control and coercion. Any effort to make positive changes in immigration systems must contend with the counterpressure created by the very idea of national sovereignty.

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